



Life as a Gay Man

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My early years of work at The University of Akron as a gay man can best be described by the word “discretion.” I came of age after Stonewall and before the AIDS epidemic in the ’70s. When I arrived at The University of Akron in 1989, after having lived in Europe and California, I was surprised to find myself in a place of such stifling silence. I was told to be discreet, not to draw attention to one’s self or situation. Even The University of Akron students didn’t broadcast their sexuality. Everything was pulled in, no strings showing.

My spouse is self-employed; therefore, domestic partner benefits are a big deal for us. I recall sitting in the faculty senate during one discussion about including domestic partner benefits in the insurance package and being referred to as a “degenerate” and an “animal.” I felt betrayed when the first AAUP union contract failed to secure domestic partner benefits. When I asked a colleague at Youngstown State University how they had gotten them, he replied, “It’s the human thing to do, isn’t it?”

I organized a small group of professors to put pressure on the

union to make sure domestic partner benefits would be part of the second contract. The union assured me that the second contract would include the benefits, and it did. I still feel an atmosphere of discretion hovers over our University. People are more comfortable with silence. But the new generation is not discreet, and The University of Akron community better be ready to include these new LGBTQ+ youth, faculty, and staff on our campus. No more discretion!